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ABSTRACT

Adaptable to all age levels and to various areas of the language arts curriculum, the activities suggested in this book are examples of the types of experiences that teachers have found interesting and exciting for children and that call for involvement on the part of the children. The activities have been used successfully by teachers in developing children's competency in oral and written communications. Language arts centers are discussed, task cards are explained and examples given, and the following activities are described: creative writing folders, flannel board stories, puppets, dioramas and murals, plays, newspapers, television or radio, and book production. (HOD)

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LANGUAGE ARTS, THE CHILD, AND THE CURRICULUM

The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Bureau of Elementary Curriculum Development
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FOREWORD

Language arts is the cohesive force in the elementary curriculum. It permeates all the child's activities and experiences. Music, art, mathematics, the study of time and space all depend on and foster the child's language. The skills inherent in language arts are an integral part of all academic disciplines and the acquisition of knowledge in any academic discipline is dependent upon competency of language arts skills.

Specific language arts skills may occasionally be isolated for examination and analysis, but true learning of language takes place in the whole. Language arts should not be separated from the rest of the school curriculum but should be an integral part of children's daily experience. This integration of the language arts into other disciplines is dependent upon the teacher's skill and creativity. The teacher of elementary school children must be knowledgeable about the scope and sequence of the total curriculum, cognizant of the specific language arts skills, and a skilled observer of children. Further, the teacher must be able to relate her knowledge and experience to materials, approaches, and appropriate activities for children.

This bulletin has been prepared to assist teachers in their search for techniques, ideas, and activities which will afford the children with whom they work challenging and reasonable correlated language arts opportunities. It presents suggestions which have been successfully used by teachers in developing children's competency in oral and written communications.

The Department expresses its appreciation to Virginia Lowe, Slingerlands, for preparing the original manuscript of this publication. Robert B. Carruthers, Chief, Bureau of English Education, reviewed the manuscript. Dorothy M. Foley, Associate, Bureau of Elementary Curriculum, contributed material to the manuscript and prepared it for press.

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CONTENTS

Foreword ---------- iii

Introduction ---------- 1

Language Arts Centers ---------- 2

Task Cards ---------- 4

  Task Card Examples ---------- 5

Extended Activities ---------- 10

  Creative Writing Folders ---------- 10

  Flannel Board Stories ---------- 11

  Puppets ---------- 12

  Dioramas and Murals ---------- 13

  Plays ---------- 14

  Newspapers ---------- 15

  Television or Radio Station ---------- 15

  Writing Books ---------- 16

Other Department Publications ---------- 17

INTRODUCTION

Language arts skills are developed through active involvement in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Children need many opportunities to participate, individually and in small groups, in activities which utilize and extend these skills. These activities may be self-directed or teacher directed, formal or informal. They must, however, be varied, based on the children's interests, and carried on in an atmosphere conducive to experimentation. As children test their skills in new situations, they need to feel free to make and learn from mistakes. At the same time, the teacher needs to assist the children in meeting legitimate standards.

The teacher creates the situation, motivation, and environment which encourage children to express themselves. Building on children's expressed interests, she provides suggestions and ideas for developing these, arranges to have the necessary materials available for the children, and continuously provides guidance and assistance to individuals and small groups. The teacher introduces new areas of study and resources to the children. She provides options, notes the children's choices, and observes the way each child undertakes a particular activity. Through this observation she discovers difficulties, analyzes progress, and determines future tasks needed to gain skill competency. It is the teacher's skill that induces and fosters activities that provide progression in learning and it is her task to insure that the child's learning is enhanced.

The activity-oriented acquisition and application of language arts is important to all children - beginners, intermediates, and advanced. Whether the classroom is a self-contained one with a teacher and one group of children, or one in which several teachers meet with a group of children; whether it is an old "egg-crate" building or a new open space one; whether the groups are organized by age or are multi-age, language arts is an integral part of all phases of the curriculum, and should be activity oriented to meet the needs of individual children.

The activities suggested in the following pages are examples of the type of experiences that teachers have found interest and excite children and which call for real involvement on the part of children. These activities are adaptable to all age levels and to various areas of the curriculum. It is hoped that as teachers and children become involved in trying some of these activities, new ideas and approaches will be generated.

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LANGUAGE ARTS CENTERS

The language arts center is a physical area in the classroom set up so that children can work independently or in small groups on specific tasks. It is a quiet area of the room where children may work with a minimum of distraction and at their own pace. It is an attractive place conducive to thinking and creating.

The language arts center should house most of the materials, equipment, books, and audiovisual hardware and software necessary to carry out involved projects as well as short specifically assigned tasks.

A language arts center should contain:

- Books
- Chart paper
- Crayons
- Dictionaries
- Headsets
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Paste
- Pencils
- Record players
- Records
- Scissors
- Tape recorders
- Writing paper

Materials should be attractively and neatly arranged.

In order to provide structure, the language arts center may be organized around a central theme. All materials and suggested activities in the center would be related to this theme, and the focus of the center would change as new units were introduced to the group.

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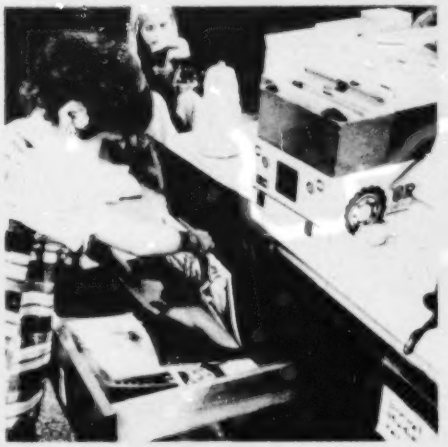
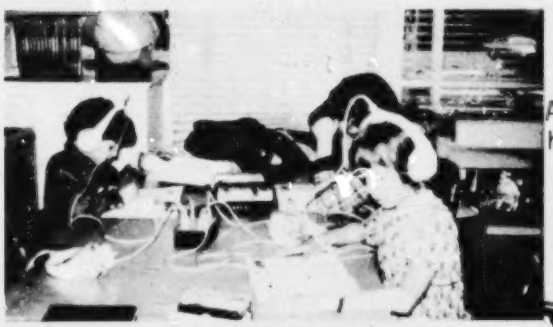
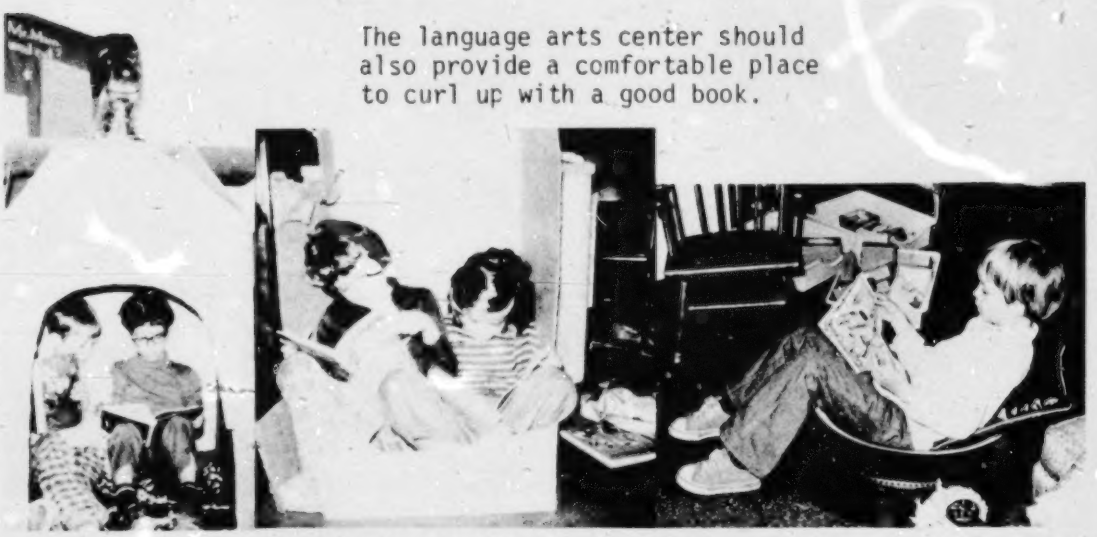
Agreed upon location for books, magazines, and other items provides accessibility and keeps things in their place when not in use.





A designated convenient place for hardware provides ease of use.

The language arts center should also provide a comfortable place to curl up with a good book.



TASK CARDS

An effective system for having assignments readily available to meet specific needs of particular children is through the use of task cards. These are cards (5" x 8" file cards work very well) on which are written activities that children can carry out independently or with very little help. Each card contains a compact idea aimed at a definite objective. Directions for accomplishing the task, a method of recording the completed task, a technique for sharing the results with the group or teacher, and an evaluation procedure should be included on each task card. Task cards may be related to an ongoing theme in the classroom, may supplement and enrich other classroom experiences, or may be skill oriented.

Skill task cards are usually aimed at reinforcing or extending competency in a particular skill. The activities provided on skill task cards are accomplished in a relatively short time and are usually assigned by the teacher to individual children with specific needs. Children are expected to precisely follow the directions on skill cards and to get immediate feedback on their success in accomplishing the assigned task.

Idea task cards suggest longer range, more complex assignments than those provided by skill cards. Children usually have more opportunity for choice in the use of these cards and are encouraged to embellish, amplify, and adapt the suggested activities to meet their particular needs. While the objectives for skill cards are very specific, the objectives for idea cards are broader and often compound.

Teachers usually prepare skill cards. Once the system is established, children, aides, other teachers, and parents might add cards to the collection of idea task cards.

In order that task cards may be most useful to children and teachers, a filing system is a must. If 5" x 8" cards are used, shoe boxes provide good storage boxes. File folders and a cardboard carton provide a storage and retrieval system for larger "cards." It is suggested that skill cards and idea cards be filed separately. Cataloging task cards according to objectives assures their easy and quick retrieval when needed. Sequential numbering of task cards in each area will help to keep the collection intact.

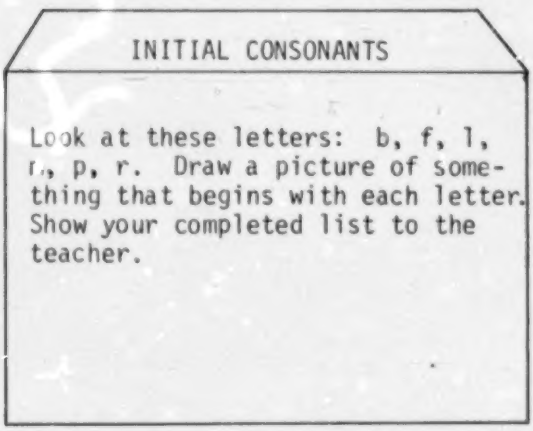
The following task card samples are illustrative only. The five strands of English Language Arts K-12 (Reading, Composition, Literature, Listening and Speaking, and Language) will be invaluable to teachers wondering where to start in developing files of task cards. The scope and sequence of the language arts and the specific skills and objectives of the program are to be found in these bulletins. Some activities are also found in these strands. Teachers will find it necessary to develop further activities. Ideas for these may be found in textbooks, workbooks, professional magazines, other teachers, and certainly in the teacher herself. It may take a year or more to develop a relatively complete set of task cards, but once a start has been made, teachers will find it a most convenient way to keep their language arts center a busy, exciting place for children.

TASK CARD EXAMPLES

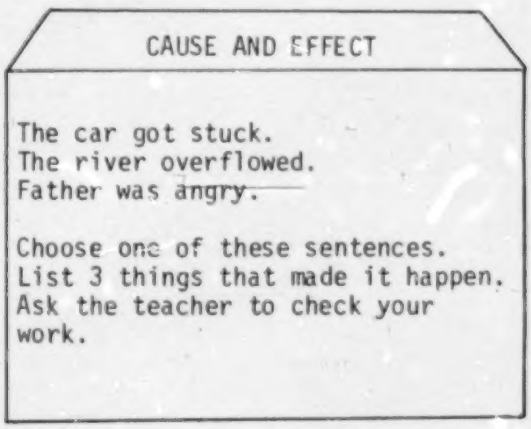
The following illustrative task cards are cross referenced to the appropriate strands of English Language Arts K-12 to demonstrate the relationship to the scope and sequence of development and the interrelationship of the va ous strands.

Younger children may be able to complete the activity suggested on a particular task card, but not be able to read the directions. Teachers or older children may need to explain the activity to beginning readers.

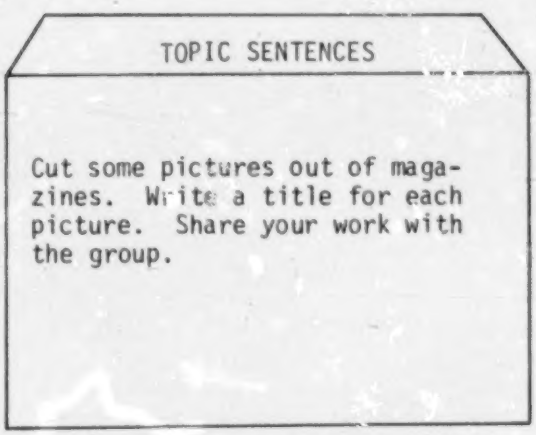
SKILL TASK CARDS


INITIAL CONSONANTS
Look at these letters: b, f, l, r, p, r. Draw a picture of something that begins with each letter. Show your completed list to the teacher.

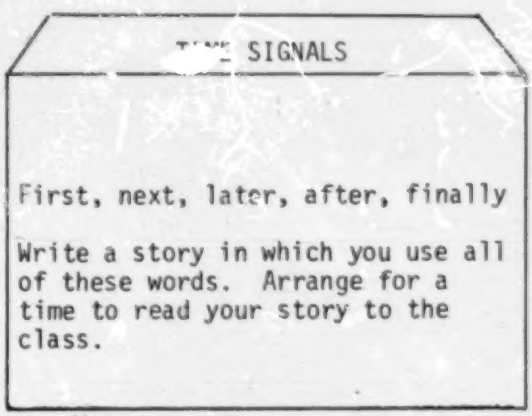
Reading - p. 2


CAUSE AND EFFECT
The car got stuck.
The river overflowed.
Father was angry.
Choose one of these sentences. List 3 things that made it happen. Ask the teacher to check your work.

Reading - pp. 36, 38
Composition - pp. 49, 56
Literature - pp. 8, 12, 17



Reading - pp. 36, 38
Composition - pp. 49, 56
Literature - p. 39


TIME SIGNALS
First, next, later, after, finally
Write a story in which you use all of these words. Arrange for a time to read your story to the class.

Reading - p. 35
Composition - pp. 18, 48, 55, 56
Literature - pp. 12, 17, 26

Directions for making: Write on individual 3x5 cards a series of nouns, verbs, articles, and prepositions. Be sure that these may be organized in a variety of ways.

BUILDING SENTENCES

Boy, girl, dog, house, store, bank, runs, finds, walks, talks, fell, the, a, to, in

Look at the words. See how many sentences you can write using only these words. Show your finished paper to the teacher.

Composition - *p. 4*
Language - *pp. 7, 27*

INFLEXIONAL CHANGES

This game is played like Old Maid. Choose three friends to play with. Deal out all the cards. Take turns picking cards from each other and make pairs of words. The one who has the monster card at the end loses.

Directions for making: Cut out an odd number of 3x5 cards. Write one word on each card being sure to have pairs included in the deck--take, took; see, saw; man, men. Make one card with a face of a monster on it.

Reading - *pp. 5, 9*

CONTRASTING AND COMPARING

Draw a set of pictures that show how people live in the city and in the country. Label your pictures. Good labels might be:

Going to School	Working
Shopping	Visiting
Playing	Traveling

Put your pictures on the bulletin board.

Composition - *pp. 51, 58*
Literature - *pp. 47, 51*

USING COMPARISONS

See how many different ways you can finish these sentences.
The lake was as _____.
The boy sounded like _____.

Make up sentences of your own that use "as" and "like." Compare your sentences with those others have written.

Literature - *pp. 47, 51*

MOOD

Draw a picture for each of these words.

Sad	Cold
Happy	Frightened
Angry	
Hot	

Mount your pictures and put them on the bulletin board.

Literature - pp. 47, 51

SETTING

Think about a book you have just read. List words which tell where and when the story took place.

Example:

where words: woods, long way from home

When words: once upon a time

Literature - pp. 22, 26
Composition - p. 47
Reading - pp. 20, 24

SETTING

Choose one of these lists of words to use in a story.

A	B	C
dark	sunny	eager
gloomy	flowery	waiting
screeching	laughing	disappointed
sinister	suprise	miserable
sudden	fragrant	sobbing
eerie	sweet	broken-hearted

Write a story using all the words in the list you choose.

Literature - pp. 22, 26, 51
Language - p. 9
Composition - pp. 6, 12, 16
Reading - pp. 20, 24

PLOT

Make a book jacket for a book you particularly enjoyed. The picture on the cover should illustrate the main idea of the story. A summary of the story should be written on the flyleaf of the book jacket. Remember not to give away the ending!

Literature - pp. 12, 17
Reading - pp. 34, 37

CHARACTERIZATION

Listen to the tape from "King of the Golden River" which describes the "King." Draw and color a picture of the king. Compare your picture with those done by others. Be ready to defend your interpretations.

Literature - pp. 3, 8
Listening and Speaking - p. 2

LETTER WRITING

Write an imaginary letter from one story book character to another. Check in your language arts book for the correct form for a friendly letter. Describe an event that happened in the book or story. Proofread your letter. Read it to a friend. Mount your letter on construction paper for the bulletin board.

Composition - pp. 47, 48, 51, 52
Literature - pp. 3, 8

IDEA TASK CARDS

GATHERING INFORMATION

Cut pictures out of a magazine of things that begin with the same sound. Mount the pictures for the bulletin board.

Reading - pp. 2, 55

ORAL PRESENTATION

Bring your collection (baseball cards, stamps, rocks, seashells) to class. Set up a display. Schedule a time to tell the group about your collection.

Listening and Speaking - pp. 64, 65, 68, 86

GATHERING INFORMATION: GRAPHS

Ask as many people (children and adults) as you can what their favorite television program is. Keep careful records. Use this information to make a graph showing how many people choose each program mentioned. Share your results with the class.

Reading - pp. 55, 58
Listening and Speaking - pp. 2, 3, 25, 26, 63, 64

ARTICLES

Choose a news item with ongoing coverage in the newspapers. For one week cut all articles pertaining to this item out of the paper. Date these and file them. At the end of the week write an editorial about this event to be included in the school newspaper.

Composition - pp. 47, 55, 59, 60
Literature - pp. 13, 17

CHARACTERIZATION

Encourage a friend to read a book that you enjoyed. Work together to prepare a short skit to interest others in this book. Develop a scene which will depict the traits of the characters and give some clues as to the plot of the story.

Literature - pp. 4, 8, 12, 18
Listening and Speaking - pp. 80, 81

PLAY WRITING: ORAL READING

Write a short play about a hero or heroine you have read about. Ask a few classmates to take the parts. Tape record the play and present it as a radio program for a group of younger children.

Reading - pp. 76, 77
Composition - pp. 49, 51, 52, 55, 56
Listening and Speaking - pp. 3, 4, 7, 8, 82, 83
Literature - p. 3

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DEVELOPING EVENTS INTO A STORY

Write down a real or imagined problem. Make a list of things which caused the problem. Think of a possible solution. Write a story using this listing. Arrange for a time to read your story for the group.

Reading - pp. 33, 38
Composition - pp. 51, 52, 56, 59
Literature - pp. 12, 18

SETTING

Make a puppet play with one or two other people. Base your play on a book you have all read. Use kraft paper to make scenery for your play. Cardboard sheets, boxes, and tubes make good bases for props such as furniture, trees, etc. Paint your scenery and props so that they will make an effective setting for your play.

Literature - pp. 22, 26
Listening and Speaking - pp. 82, 84, 86

SEQUENCING EVENTS

Make a series of pictures that would describe an event in history such as the evolution of the airplane. Write a caption for each picture. Mount the pictures on a strip of brown kraft paper. Schedule a time with the teacher or aide to show the "movie" to the class.

Reading - pp. 33, 38
Composition - pp. 48, 49, 55, 56
Literature - pp. 12, 13, 17, 18

DEVELOPING MOOD

Think about a story you would like to write. Decide whether it will be funny, scary, sad, etc. Make a list of words and phrases which you might use to establish the mood you choose. Use as many of these words as you can in writing your story.

Literature - pp. 65, 68

For additional suggestions for task cards refer to Language Arts K-12 strands available from the Bureau of Elementary Curriculum Development, New York State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234.

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EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

CREATIVE WRITING FOLDERS

Folders for children's creative writing can be an invaluable aid to child and teacher. Children's work in progress may be kept in personal folders for review, corrections, further development, and proofreading in conference with the teacher. Completed work may be filed in individual folders so that child, teacher, and parent may see progress made, previous problems encountered, and future expectations.

Creative writing projects may stem spontaneously from the child or be motivated by the teacher. Pictures, posters, or films which are open-ended in nature often provide a good place for children to begin writing. Problem situations which evolve from stories or real life might be developed by the children through creative writing. With encouragement, children will use their imaginations, and sometimes their writing can be quite suprising. Lead them, also, to use many different forms of writing inlcuding plays, poems, tape scripts, letters, essays, and stories.

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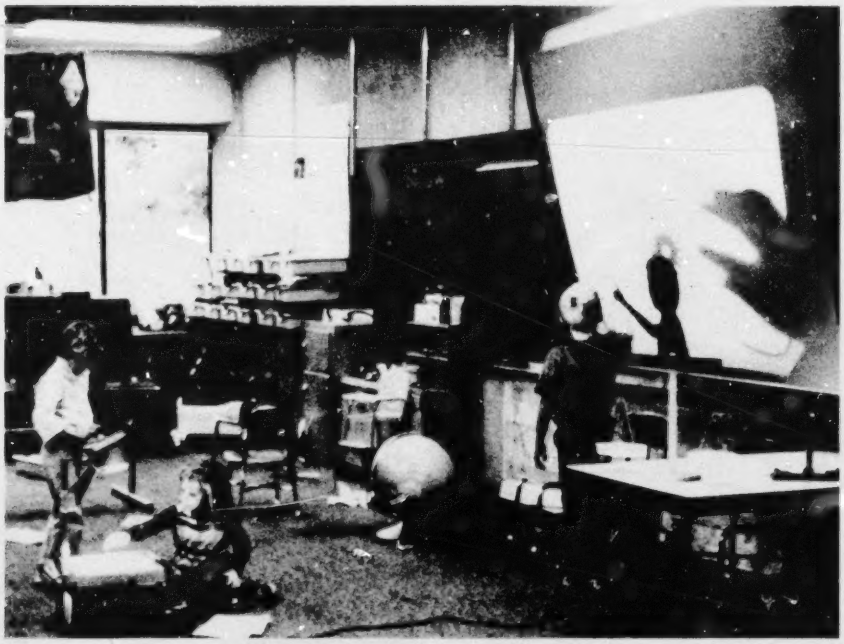

FLANNEL BOARD STORIES

The use of the flannel board presents a variety of ways in which to integrate language arts skills. It can be used in a structured manner or an open-ended manner, depending upon the children with whom it is used.

With younger children, the teacher may write a child's story on an experience chart as it is being told. The story can then be re-read and any necessary corrections made. The child may then select story figures and present the story to the group. The story becomes a part of the language arts center. Children can re-read the story and present it at a later time, or they can alter the story with a different ending, thus creating a new story. In this type of activity, the story that is written should be limited to one page. By setting limits in the length of the written story, children are forced to compress their thoughts, and a story not too long to work with is developed.

For older children, the flannel board may serve as a visual aid for oral reports. In explaining to the group something learned in social studies, science, mathematics, or other areas of the curriculum, a child may create flannel board items to help tell his story. Sequences such as plant growth, water and air pollution, and bridge construction are particularly adaptable to this method of presentation.

Although the flannel board is the simplest and least expensive mode for these experiences, these ideas may be adapted to more sophisticated technology. Transparencies and an overhead projector or pictures for the opaque projector would assist children in adding meaning to oral reports. Slides or photographs taken by the children help them to organize and sequence their learning for sharing with others. Whichever technique is used, the child begins to learn more dynamic ways to communicate his views and ideas with others.

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PUPPETS

Puppets seem to hold a fascination for children. Children watching a puppet show get involved with the characters and interact with them. Children operating puppets allow the puppet to do things they would never dare do. The shy, uncommunicative child will often let a puppet talk for him. The aggressive child will sometimes let a puppet reveal his need for aggression. The puppet is a character unto himself, not someone else playing a role, and children seem to feel free to endow puppets with clean-cut, direct, uncomplicated personalities.

Because of the uniqueness of puppets, they offer the elementary teacher a tremendous vehicle for language arts development. Opportunities are offered for children to actively participate in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, in order to put the stress on language arts, the construction of puppets should be viewed as a preliminary step. A prolonged arts and crafts unit on puppet construction may diminish children's enthusiasm and spontaneity. It is best to make simple finger, hand, rod, or shadow puppets and then put them into action.

When children first begin to use their puppets, opportunities need to be provided for them to get to know their characters. These first attempts should be informal with puppets interacting with each other and dialogue and actions developing spontaneously. Later, the puppets may be used to illustrate a specific theme such as community life, a historical event, playground problems, or the theme of a library book or story.

As children become proficient in the use of puppets and gain experience in ad libbing short sequences, they may begin writing puppet plays. The accent should be on dialogue and action for puppets with very significant characteristics. Such experience helps the children develop the basic tools for good story writing--characterization, theme, problem, and problem resolution.

Directions for making simple puppets and scripts may be written by the children and become part of the language arts center. These scripts may be used by other children to reproduce puppet shows or as ideas for developing further programs. Directions that are particularly clear and scripts that are particularly well written may serve as models for children who need more help with sequencing and format.

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DIORAMAS AND MURALS

Dioramas and murals provide opportunities for a group of children to work together on a common project. Interpersonal communication skills are developed and implemented as the group decides on the theme for its project, the media to be used in constructing it, and the sequence they will use to tell their story.

Dioramas and murals may be used to illustrate an important event that is being studied in social studies or in a book that is being read. Making a tape recording describing various parts of the mural helps the children to organize their material and verbalize their interpretations. A series of cassettes and headsets provided at appropriate places along the diorama or mural allows other children in the school to have it explained to them.

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PLAYS

Original plays are an excellent activity for the development of all language arts skills. As a culminating project for a unit of study, a play can be written that provides opportunities for reading, spelling, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, work study skills, and many other phases of the curriculum. For example, using a loosely woven story line of a "family trip through the oceans of the world," individual and group research about oceans and their components can be developed into dramatic presentation. The publications, "Drama in the Elementary School," and "Film and Film Making as a Performing Art in the Elementary School," available through the Bureau of Elementary Curriculum, State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234 , should prove valuable aids to teachers interested in this type of language arts activity.

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NEWSPAPERS

Help the children to organize and develop a school or class newspaper. This can be an ongoing activity with continuous news reporting or a culminating project of a particular area of study. All aspects of language arts are brought into practice through such an activity.

A publication firm can be established with a board of directors. Editors, columnists. reporters, etc., would need to be designated. Those children especially interested in a particular field such as art, music, or sports, could have weekly columns. Younger children might be helped by older children to develop short articles. Personnel from local papers might be invited to submit guest editorials on occasion.

TELEVISION OR RADIO STATION

Television and radio play an important part in the lives of children. Even though a school may possess no actual radio or television equipment, language arts activities can be conducted through a make-believe station. The school public address system might be utilized for broadcasts or broadcasts may be taped and made available to groups throughout the school. Language arts skills in writing, speaking, and listening can be brought into use through the production of a weekly news program. As in the newspaper activity, a radio or television firm can be created. Reporters, station managers, anchormen, etc., can conduct interviews and give news of the school as well as of the community, state, and nation. Guests can be invited to present items of special interest. A person from an animal shelter, a person from an environmental center, a local politician, the school superintendent, or custodians would be valuable resources for brief spots.

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WRITING BOOKS

All of us take great pride in seeing our work in print. When children first see something they have written presented as a finished product, not only do they feel a great sense of achievement, but they are encouraged to do more. A simple way of presenting children's work in finished form is through the production of books.

Books can be created from children's own experience or from their imaginations. They might be outgrowths of creative writing lessons or based on a unit in social studies, science, or another area of the curriculum. They may be fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or drama. In any case, they should be an example of the child's best work. Sufficient time should be devoted to each book's production to insure its quality.

In preparing a book, the child should write a first copy. This copy should be considered a work copy. Working in individual conference with the child, the teacher helps him edit this first copy and offers suggestions for making it clearer, more interesting, and better organized. The child then writes a second copy incorporating all suggestions. This second copy is edited by teacher and child. Final copy may be typed by a cooperating adult or printed by the child in his most legible manuscript. Space should be left for illustrations.

Once final copy has been prepared, it is illustrated by the author. The book is then laminated in order to protect the pages, bound with front and back covers and illustrated by the author. A final touch of authenticity may be added to these books by having them catalogued by the librarian and added to the library's collection.

In order to maintain high standards and quality work in the children's books, it is important to devote time to the individuals producing them. For this reason, it is suggested that this activity be an ongoing one throughout the year with but a small group of children being involved at any particular time. It would be almost impossible for a teacher to help a whole classroom of children write books in a specified month. However, if individual children work on this project as their skills and motivation dictate, many children should be able to produce books worthy of becoming part of the school library to be enjoyed by all members of the school community.

OTHER DEPARTMENT PUBLICATIONS

The following language arts related publications contain ideas which teachers will find helpful in meeting needs of children. These and other publications are available from the Bureau of Elementary Curriculum Development, State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234.

1. English Language Arts

   Composition K-12
   Language K-12
   Listening and Speaking K-12
   Literature K-12
   Reading K-12

2. Drama in the Elementary School
3. Film and Film Making as a Performing Art in the Elementary School
4. Guidelines to Open Education
5. Invitation to the Dance
6. Library Programs for the Disadvantaged
7. Open Education - ESEA Title I - Theresa, Theater, and Terrariums
8. Pupil Progress Recordkeeping